Why PSM changes over time: A longitudinal study assessing the impact of 'reality shock'

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Introduction

The motivation people have to contribute to society and to shape the well-being of others - public service motivation (PSM) – is one of the most popular research topics in recent public management literature (Perry and Hondeghem 2008). Interest in PSM is high because highly public service motivated individuals are expected to perform well because they are working to provide services that they perceive as meaningful (e.g., Brewer 2008; Brewer and Selden 2000). There is a large body of research investigating the relationship between PSM and performance (Vandenabeele et al. 2014)

A relatively young strand of PSM research responds to the invitation of leading PSM scholars (e.g., Bozeman and Su 2014; Perry and Hondeghem 2008; Wright and Grand 2010) to perform longitudinal research (e.g., Braeder and Andersen 2013; Kjeldsen 2013; Kroll and Vogel 2013; Wright and Christensen 2010; Ward 2014). This type of research is important because it increases our understanding of how PSM develops over time which, in turn, can help to explain the higher level of PSM generally found among civil servants as compared to individuals working in private organizations (e.g., Houston, 2006; Rainey, 1982; Steijn, 2008; Taylor, 2008).

If PSM is stable, higher levels of PSM among public sector employees cannot be the result of *organizational socialization mechanisms* but should be attributed to *attraction-selection-retention mechanisms*. The main argument of proponents of the former mechanism is that public values are internalized or socialized in such a way as to result in a higher level of PSM. The main argument of the latter mechanism as explanation for the high level of PSM found among civil servants is that public service motivated employees are attracted by public sector work because of the opportunity it offers to contribute to the public interest and provide meaningful public services.

The results of longitudinal PSM research, however, suggest that post-entry PSM dynamics are even more complex. Georgellis and Tabvuma (2010) found that individuals who accepted a public sector job show an increased level of PSM for at least five years. Ward (2014) and Kjeldsen and Jacobsen (2012) found that PSM declines over time after joining the labour market, but that the drop in PSM may be reduced by positive (public) socialization. Kroll and Vogel (2013), on the other hand, found evidence that PSM is stable across time. Kjeldsen (2013) and Braender and Andersen (2013) went a step further. The authors included the characteristics of the work and Danish soldiers' 'deployment to war', respectively, into the analysis, in order to get a more complete picture of post-entry PSM dynamics. They found that the different PSM dimensions changed in different ways or stayed stable across time. This means that some studies wholly or in part support the idea of PSM being a stable trait, while others indicate that PSM is a dynamic state that can not only increase after joining public organizations, but also decrease over time.

Together these studies suggest that our knowledge with regard to post-entry PSM dynamics is still limited. Neither socialization nor attraction-selection-retention mechanisms can sufficiently explained *why* PSM decreases over time. One theoretical explanation for the decline of PSM across time often cited is the 'reality shock'

(Kjeldsen, 2013; Braender and Andersen, 2013; Kjeldsen and Jacobsen, 2012), a phenomenon that has been observed among, for example, social workers (Blau, 1960), police recruits (Van Maanen, 1975), and teachers (De Cooman et al., 2009). The argumentation is that newcomers who are initially motivated by their interest to help others become frustrated and disillusioned by the reality of their daily work; by negative attitudes of clients; complicated procedures; red tape; and by lack of gratitude and positive feedback.

This explorative study aims to contribute to our gap in knowledge by investigating the question *why* PSM changes over time. In particular, we aim to shed light on the mechanism explaining the often found decrease in PSM while focusing on the role the 'reality shock' plays in post-entry PSM dynamics. Does a mismatch between the individual's initial job expectations and the actual reality at the work floor result in a decrease in PSM? Traditional quantitative research on the nature of PSM primarily focusses on isolating socialization and attraction-selection mechanisms. These mechanism, however, cannot explain the often found decline of PSM after job entry. Because qualitative research approach is well-suited for identify settings and contextual factors yet unkown to the researcher, how they relate to the phenomenon of interest, and to describe complex processes (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) we investigate the research question using the data gained from longitudinal, semi-structured interviews with newcomers at the Dutch Food and Product Safety Consumer Authority instead of quantitative methods used in previous longitudinal PSM research. In doing so, we pick up the invitation by Kjeldsen and Jacobsen (2012) to conduct qualitative research which enables us 'to get closer to the causal mechanism underlying individual adaption processes' (p.22).

By increasing our insights of post-entry PSM dynamic we contribute to the current debate on of the stability of PSM, which in turn, has implications for questions such as whether higher levels of PSM found among public employees compared to private sector employees can be explained by attraction-selection or socialization mechanisms. Next to this, in-depth knowledge of why PSM changes is also of practical relevance. It clarifies whether changes in PSM can possibly be influenced by HR policies.

Theoretical framework

Before reviewing literature on the nature of PSM providing different explanations for both the stable and dynamic character of PSM, we first elaborate on the dimensionality of PSM because of the advice by Kim et al. (2012) that scholars should use all four dimensions of PSM when studying the concept, because these have different antecedents and consequences.

Recently, a great number of international PSM scholars from twelve different countries combined their efforts: they systematically investigated the dimensionality of (Kim et al., 2012). The results of this study indicate that PSM is a four-dimensional construct including the dimensions: Attraction to public service (APS), Commitment to public values (CPV), Compassion (COM), and Self-sacrifice (SS). *Attraction to public service* is an action-oriented dimension. It focusses on the degree to which participants are dedicated to public service, community and common good, and are willing to participate in the public policy process. This dimension is related to the rational choice processes. *Commitment to public values* is a value-based dimension assessing the 'extent to which an individual's interest in public service is driven by their internalization of and interest in pursuing commonly held public values such as equity, concern for future generations, accountability and ethics' (Kim et al. 2012, p. 83). This dimensions maps to normative motives. C*ompassion* can be regarded as a sense of patriotism and benevolence which is described by Frederickson and Hart (1985) as an extensive love for all people within the community and the imperative to protect them. It reflects affective motives. Finally, the willingness to substitute services to others for tangible personal rewards refers to the dimension *self-sacrifice*. This dimension presents the altruistic or pro-social origins of PSM (Perry, 1996).

Even though Perry and Wise defined PSM as "a predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public organizations" (p. 368), most findings suggest that PSM seems to be a dynamic state (e.g., Braeder and Andersen, 2013; Georgellis and Tabvuma, 2010; Kjeldsen and Jacobsen, 2012); i.e. that PSM is a "dynamic behavioral

concept anchored in the types of behavior people exhibit rather than in the sectors in which they work" (p. 416). Others argue that PSM might be both at the same time: a relatively enduring individual predispositions and a temporary psychological state (Liu et al. 2014). Support for this approach can a be found outside of the PSM-research field. Chatman (1991) and Cable and Parson (2001), for example, found a positive relationship between organizational socialization activities and value matches between workers and their employing organization.

What remains unclear is the question *why* PSM changes over time; especially the question *why* the level of PSM decreases over time. As mentioned earlier, organizational socialization is commonly expected to be a crucial mechanism for "transmitting a 'public institutional logic' and seeding public service motivation" (Brewer 2008; p. 149). On the basis of this argument Paalberg, Perry and Hondeghem (2008) point out that PSM may be stimulated by providing "formal and informal opportunities for newcomers to learn about organizational values and expectations for employee behavior that reflect public service values" (p .271). Organizational socialization, however, cannot explain the often found drop in PSM after entering public service organizations (e.g., Ward, 2014; Kjeldsen and Jacobsen, 2012). The authors of both studies argue that this decrease might be explained by the reality shock individuals experience after entering the labour market. However, they do not measure the reality shock directly but derive this conclusion from the fact that PSM drops after the individual has entered the labour market. A mechanism underlying the decrease of PSM which did get tested is the sociopsychological mechanism of dehumanization resulting from dramatic events: the deployment of soldiers to war (Braender and Andesen, 2013).

This observation makes clear that empirical research on the effect of the 'reality shock' on the development of PSM is strongly needed. Cleary more theoretical explanations for the drop in PSM exist such as a lack of satisfaction of the three basic needs autonomy, relatedness, and competence which – according to the *self-determination theory* – is crucial for the internalization of public values into an public service identity (Perry and Vandenabeele, 2008). A similar line of reasoning can be found in what Perry and Vandenabeele (2008) call *predisposition-opportunity theory.* Central to this theory is the idea that only when an organizations' incentive system matches

individual motivation which is based on rational, normative, and affective motives that public service motivated behavior will occur. Another possible explanation for a drop in PSM can be found in *crowding-out theory* (Frey and Jegen, 2001). This theory suggests that PSM is crowded-out when payment is related to performance in such a way that it is perceived as controlling by individuals, implying that they can no longer perform an activity purely for the sake of it. Because of the explorative character of this study, however, we focus in this theory section on the 'reality shock' and the question how it possible relates to changes in PSM. In the Discussion, we will link empirical findings different from the 'reality shock' to relevant theories afterwards.

The term 'reality shock' goes back to the work of Hughes (1958) and is linked to unsuccessful organizational socialization. In various studies it has been used to describe the discrepancy between how nursing graduates understand their professional nursing role on the basis of their training, and the working reality they are confronted with when entering the practice of healthcare services (e.g., Kramer, 1974; Duchscher, 2001, 2008; Delaney, 2003). However, reality shocks are not a unique characteristic of the transition from nursing graduate to professional; they have also been observed among teachers (Weinstein, 1988) and police recruits (Van Maanen, 1975). Next to this, Dean et al. (1988) showed that accountants who switch from one job to another can also experience reality shock. This means that reality shock plays a role not only during the transition from being a student to being a professional, but also in situations in which newcomers' expectations formed prior to organizational entry – for example, during the selection and recruitment process or earlier working experiences – are not compatible with the reality of the new working context. Fisher (1986) even goes one step further. The author argues that reality shock may even occur during an individual's career within the same organization, for example in response to a promotion in which expectations are not met.

Building upon Wright and Pandey's (2008) critical note that just because public agencies can provide individuals with opportunities to act upon their PSM there is no guarantee that agencies actually will, I argue that public service motivated individuals may experience a reality shock after job entry, which results in a drop in PSM. Indeed, employees may be frustrated by high levels of red tape in public organizations (Boyne,

2002), lack of sufficient resources, vague policy goals, and formally circumscribed rules, regulations and directives from above (Lipsky, 1980) and/or clashes between an organizational focus and a focus on the public interest at the core of public service motivation (Steen and Rutgers, 2013), because these characteristics of the public sector prevent PSM from being effectively put into practice. Individuals who expect that their job will enable them to contribute to the public interest and make a difference for society may realize that the working reality looks differently and consequently lose their PSM.

Study design, case and methods

Qualitative research is well-suited for developing complex concepts and making inferences about causations for a limited number of cases (Coppedge 1999). As it is the aim of this study to increase our understanding of why PSM develops over time – in particular, which role the 'reality shock' plays in this development – interviews constitute a suitable research method. The interviews used in this study were semi-structured, which means that the phrasing and order of the questions were not predetermined. Rather, a list of topics - which can be found in the Appendix (Tables A1a, A1b, and A1c) - was designed beforehand on the basis of the literature discussed in the theory section.

We conducted two rounds of 15 semi-structured interviews with newcomers of a specific group of public service professionals, which lasted on average one hour. All respondents only recently entered employment as veterinary inspectors working at the Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (*Nederlandse Voedsel- and Warenautoriteit*, NVWA). Their primary task, as outlined by the NVWA, is to protect three core values (public health, animal health, and animal welfare) and manage potential risks for society through consistent rule enforcement - at abattoirs and animal transports for example. The first round of interviews took place shortly after the respondents had started work at the NVWA. They were still in training at that moment (October 2014). The second round followed on average 15 months later (spring 2014), which means that I talked to each interviewee twice over a period of a little more than one year. Except for one, the interviewees had no prior working experience in the public sector. They had either just graduated from university or had been working in the private sector as

practicing veterinarians (Appendix 1 provides an overview of the respondents' characteristics). This means, we control for PSM found among newcomers potentially being caused by prior socialization in the public sector.

All interviews had a similar structure. The interviewers introduced themselves, explained what the interview would be about, and assured the interviewees that anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed. After that, the interviews were started very broadly by asking the inspectors why they had studied veterinary medicine in the first place, how they had ended up at the food safety authority, and what motivated them in their work. We also addressed work and organizational expectations, via questions such as "What did you expect from the NVWA as an employer?" and "Did you have any prior expectations of the work of a veterinary inspector?" In order to learn more about the reality of the work, in the second round of interviews with the newcomers we asked "Is the job any different from what you had expected"? and "Any problems you encountered?" The interviews also included topics that are not part of this conference paper, such as organizational socialization tactics. After recording the interviews, they were transcribed, anonymized, and coded using MAXQDA (In Tables Table A2, A3 in the Appendix, a coding scheme can be found.[1])

The strategy for analyzing the interviews consisted of two phases: *open coding* and *axial coding*. We started the first and second rounds of the interviews with newcomers with open coding. All elements mentioned by the respondent as being motivating were given the code 'motivation'. From the general code 'motivation' I was able to I derived six subcodes, distinguishing PSM from public sector motivation and other types of motives such as interaction and responsibility. The coding scheme for PSM was specified beforehand on the basis of the theoretical description of the construct. The subcodes of PSM reflected the four separate dimensions of PSM – commitment to public vales, compassion, attraction to public service, and self-sacrifice – as described by Kim et. al (2012). The subcodes for the other types of motivation and work expectations were developed in an exploratory way. All elements mentioned by respondents in the context of what they had initially expected from the job as veterinary inspector and from the

[1] The translations of interview transcripts below are our own; the original Dutch texts of the interview statements used in the study may be obtained from the corresponding author on request.

organization NVWA were given the code ‘organizational/job expectations’. The subcodes for this general code were developed in an exploratory way. Examples of subcodes are ‘no expectations’, ‘rule enforcement’ and ‘resistance’. In the second round of interviews, all elements that reflect how interviewees experience their actual work and work context were given the general code ‘working reality’. The subcodes of this general code – for example ‘unwieldy organization’ and ‘lack of uniformity’- were also developed in an exploratory way. By performing axial coding in the second step of the analysis, we were able to research how PSM developed over time (whether it in- or decreased) and the effect of a potential mismatch between the individual’s initial job expectations and the actual working reality within this development. Put differently, we investigated in-person variation of PSM between two rounds of interviews of all 15 employees separately and researched whether this variation could be linked to a discrepancy between ‘organizational/job expectations’ and ‘working reality’.

Empirical findings

How does public service motivation develop over time?

The results indicated that PSM seems to play an important role among newcomers at the NVWA. In the first interview round, almost all respondents (12 out of 14) mentioned that what motivates them in their work is the opportunity to safeguard the values of animal welfare and/or public health, or to change things for the better. Animal welfare and public health were sometimes mentioned in combination, but animal welfare was most frequently mentioned on its own (six times). Other aspects of PSM – such as the opportunity to banish abuse, to stand up for vulnerable people, and ideas related to ‘self-sacrifice’ – were not mentioned. This means, PSM among veterinary inspector was primarily expressed by referring to the dimensions ‘commitment to public values’: they were primarily motivated by normative motives

> *I like my work and it motivates me if things actually get better…if I do this they comply… you’re making things better together with the people from the abattoir… they listen to you… they value what you say and they try to cooperate (R14)*

> *Listen, I'm all about animal welfare. You can make a difference. It should happen gently and slowly. …[]… I find this very important… not overloading trucks… It has to be done, everybody knows it, but it needs to be done properly. That's one of my responsibilities, and I think the best one. (R13)*

Next to PSM, public sector motivation – which refers being motivated to work in the public sector because of assets such as regular working hours, income and holiday periods –, task variety, and the interactions with different stakeholders. Practical reasons such as physical complaints, troubles with former employees were also often mentioned as factors of work motivation. Beyond that, in the first round of interviews newcomers also stressed that the opportunity to develop their competencies had a motivating effect. This is not surprising, because all interviewees were in the middle of an extensive training programme. In the second round, having more responsibilities was often mentioned as being motivating. This is not surprising either; all respondents who stressed a higher level of responsibilities as a motivational factor had received a promotion just before the second round of interviews took place. This raises questions concerning causality. Are individuals motivated first of all by the opportunity to develop and be given responsibilities, and is that a) why they decided to apply for a job in which they are obliged to follow an entire training programme and b) why they received a promotion? Or is it the other way around? Are they motivated because they have the opportunity to develop and because they have more responsibilities in their new function? At first sight the results indicated that the latter explanation fits better. An increased level of responsibility is mentioned as a motivational factor only in the second round of interviews, and the opportunity to develop is mentioned more frequently in the first round than in the second. However, if we take a closer look it becomes clear that the motivations build upon each other, and that only individuals who personally asked for the promotion are motivated by the higher level of the work. After a year of working at the NVWA, some interviewees indicated that they started to have the daily working practice well in hand. This means that they did not feel any need for additional training in order to master their daily tasks and feel competent; rather, they started to look for new challenges in their work such as holding increased responsibility.

> *At this moment I have more responsibilities. I really do feel that I have more responsibilities and that it's me who has to hold things together and get everybody on the same page. I experience this as a challenge. (R14)*
>
> *In the meantime I have become a veterinary inspector with managerial responsibilities. That makes working interesting again. If this was not the case I would think: well is that really it? (R5)*

Comparing the interviews statements of PSM in the first round of interviews with PSM in the second round, we note that the importance of as a motivator generally seems to decrease. In other words, in the second round, five interviewees who initially indicated they were public service motivated – in particular by normative – seemed to have lost their PSM when they were interviewed for the second time: they did not mention any motivation that could be associated with PSM. Therefore, in this study I speak of a 'lost' of PSM while aware of the fact that the level of PSM might also just decrease. However, the qualitative method applied here makes it impossible to minor changes in the level of PSM. Next to this, the data showed that nobody who was not public service motivated when joining the NVWA indicated they were motivated by the opportunity to contribute to the public interest or safeguard certain values such as animal welfare and public health 15 months later. Together, these two findings go against both the hypothesis that PSM is stable and the socialization hypothesis. PSM did change, but it did not increase if individuals spent more time within the organization. This raises the question *why* PSM vanishes across time among some individuals, but not among others. In the next section I focus on the five individuals who had lost their PSM, compare them with individuals who remained public service motivated across time, and analyse whether the loss in PSM can be explained by a mismatch between the interviewees' job expectations and the working reality.

Why is PSM lost over time? Investigating organizational/work expectations of individuals who lost their PSM and who remained public service motivated

For the empirical assessment of the reality shock as a potential explanation for a drop in PSM, I analysed veterinary inspectors' expectations of their work and the organization, prior to their actual working experiences at the NVWA. It is noticeable that, when first

interviewed, individuals who remained public service motivated over time expressed much clearer expectations with regard to their future work and employer than people who lost their PSM. They expected that working as a veterinary inspector implied knowing all different kind of rules and regulations, and enforcing them in order to safeguard animal welfare and public health. At the same time, they realized that they were likely to encounter resistance: that the people they had to inspect might work against them, or at least try to stretch the rules, and that in much of the work they were to be on their own.

> *I find it very difficult to describe what I expect from the work. On the one hand you hope that you don't encounter difficult situations. What you want most is that the operator of the abattoir follows the rules nicely. But people also want to make money and that's why they try to stretch the rules in order to sell a little more […] On the one hand I find such situations challenging. On the other hand I am also a little afraid whether I will be able to handle this. I hope I will have sufficient background through law and legislation, trainings etcetera. (R10)*

> *Actual surveillance at slaughterhouses. Not only ensuring that everybody follows the rules and animal welfare is not put under pressure, but I also expect it to be some kind of mentoring of the organization. Not mentoring at the level of management, but focused on animal health, public health and animal welfare. (R6)*

> *What do I expect? Running ahead of things, I think it is a disadvantage that you work on your own. […] At a slaughterhouse you work alone. And you have to get up very early. (R11)*

In contrast, all five veterinary inspectors who 'lost' their PSM (as compared to the seven respondents who stayed public service motivated) seemed to have no clear expectations of the work of veterinary inspectors. One individual indicated that she phoned two inspectors she knew indirectly in order to gain a better picture. Another explained that she had watched an introduction video. A third mentioned that she had some expectations because of her father, who also works at the NVWA. Nevertheless, none of them came up with concrete expectations concerning the content of the work.

> *Not that much actually. I did not have any expectations. You can watch an introduction video on internet, where you see a little of what they [veterinary inspectors] do. Bur what they really do on a daily basis? I had no clue. This made the job application difficult too, because I had no clear idea. (R3)*

What my expectations were? I had none, I was just going to wait and see. (R2)

Yes, that's difficult. Of course I knew my father's stories, but that's not the same as doing it yourself. I got a little bit the idea that you go and check that everybody does their work properly. But concerning the actual process I really had no clue. (R4)

Summing up: At the start of their employment with the NVWA the group of interviewees who remained public service motivated over a period of 15 months had a much clearer picture of what working as a veterinary inspector implied in practice than the groups of employees who 'lost' their PSM. They were better informed not only about the actual content of the work, but also about potential difficulties such as aggression and the loneliness on the work floor. Therefore, reality shock as traditionally defined (i.e., the discrepancy between how individuals think of their future work and how they experience the working reality) seems not wholly suitable to explain the loss of normative motives PSM. Because individuals who lost their PSM did not have any clear expectations regarding their work, there could be no discrepancy between these expectations and the working reality. This raises the questions what additional mechanisms are that can help to explain why individuals with clear organizational/task expectations tend to remain public service motivated while individuals without clear picture lose their PSM.

Why is PSM lost over time? Looking for alternative explanations than the traditional reality shock

The fact that the NVWA is a large and unwieldy organization was noted and criticized by almost all newcomers in the second round of interviews. However, it seemed that this did not come as a surprise to any of the interviewees. Individuals actually indicated that this is what they had expected; however, they also said that it was frustrating that every time they wanted to take up a task – every time they wanted to be assertive – this could not be realized right away. Often it was not clear to them who needed to be involved or contacted in order to get things done.

What I don't like? The organization. Our head of team is a great guy… […]…but if you go further up in the hierarchy and you want to get things done at that level, it's really is a spineless public organization. It takes hours to achieve something – typical of government, I think. If you need something, you first have to fill in three applications and three people have to look at it. If you lucky, you'll get it, but it is also possible that you have to wait for another three months. (R2)

Well, I realize that the NVWA is a large organization. Sometimes this makes it hard to find the right people if you have a question... […]… Sometimes it takes quite a while before you get an answer. That's why everything works slowly and that's a pity. (R6)

Another frequently cited source of frustration is the lack of uniform rule enforcement. Both groups of interviewees – those losing and keeping their PSM – indicated that they had a hard time dealing with inconsistent rule enforcement. In particular, they were not happy with their impression that some colleagues do not want to enforce the law in order to spare themselves trouble with the inspectee. They emphasized that it is very important that everybody moves in the same direction, because otherwise the inspectors' authority is put under pressure and future rule enforcement becomes more difficult.

What I find disappointing is that everybody has their own opinion and their own way of doing things and it is very difficult to bring people into line a bit […]For example, you say: 'I have warned so-and-so a couple of times, shall we be a bit more strict next time? ' Then somebody else says: 'No, I don't want that! It would only make them turn against us and that's going to be difficult'. […]You cannot expect everybody to do exactly the same, but uniformity is needed! (R3)

A third source of disappointment was the attitude and behaviour of the individuals inspected. In particular, the disappointment came from the impression that many of the inspectees could not be trusted because they would try to manipulate and stretch rules, and the working atmosphere was often tense. An interesting finding is that not all newcomers experienced this negative working reality as frustrating and stressful to the same extent. Individuals who had clear expectations of what the job of veterinary inspector implies – i.e., that resistance might be part of it – seemed to experience resistant behaviour as less stressful and frustrating than individuals who had no prior working expectations. This group of employees seemed to have found ways to deal with

resistance, such as paying more attention to covering themselves or accepting resistant behaviour as a negative, but unavoidable, part of their job.

> *Well, sometimes things happen that should not happen and that means that you have to impose fines . That is not always fun to do, but it happens. But OK, that is what you expect and you just know that it's part of the job. (R9)*

> *There's one slaughterhouse where they're always glad to see the back of us, and I was not looking forward to going there. . Well, it is not always easy that's for sure. But you just cover yourself even better. Three times better than at other places. (R15)*

Interviewees who started to work rather 'unsuspecting', on the other hand, clearly indicated that they felt very uncomfortable about inspectees' attitudes and behaviour and the reactions to their work. They clearly said that this was against their expectations and that they felt upset and had trouble getting used to this.

> *I'd heard earlier: 'you cannot trust them' [inspectees] […] when it comes to the crunch they talk back to you. However, if you don't have anything on paper, you cannot achieve anything. For me, this was a learning moment, or rather it was really a surprise. I hoped that they would be honest all the time. But no! If their own interests are at stake, they take care of and start lying […] At that moment, I was upset, very upset! (R1)*

> *And what also disappointed me is that I just have to get used to working in the commercial sector. That people manipulate you and are dishonest. I have to get used to this. I tend to believe everybody, but they are just lying right in your face. (R4)*

Summing up: the stressful and difficult working reality of veterinary inspectors is reflected in the large and unwieldy organization of the NVWA, the lack of uniform rule enforcement and colleagues' resistant attitudes, and behaviours of inspectees. The bureaucratic characteristics of the NVWA do not surprise any of the newcomers, and the lack of uniform rule enforcement is acknowledged by both individuals who maintain and individuals who lose their PSM over the first months of working at the NVWA. Clear differences were found in the way interviewees experience resistant behaviour. On the one hand, individuals with clear prior work expectations seem to be able to deal with it,

but individuals who start their work as veterinary inspector rather naively seem to have much more trouble dealing with lies and manipulation. They indicate that they are disappointed and upset. I argue that this – the lack of capacities to deal with troubles – might explain why this group of individuals lose their PSM. Because experiences the 'dark side' of their work as more stressful they are no longer willing to contribute to society. In Table 1 the most important research findings are summarized.

Table 1 Schematic overview of the research findings

	Respondents with high levels of PSM (normative motives) over period of 15 month (n = 7)	Respondents who lost their PSM (normative motives) over period of 15 month (n = 5)
Organizational/task expectations	Clear picture - Rule enforcement - Solidarity - Resistance	No picture
Experience of working reality	NVWA as unwieldy organization - Acceptance Lack of consistent rule enforcement - Frustration Resistance - Acceptance - Coping strategies	NVWA as unwieldy organization - Acceptance Lack of consistent rule enforcement - Frustration Resistance - Disappointment - Stressful

Discussion and conclusion: How and why does PSM change over time?

We see a growing, but still limited, number of scholars (e.g., Georgellis and Tabvuma 2010; Kjeldsen and Jacobsen 2012; Kjeldsen 2013; Kroll and Vogel 2013) who address one of the most pressing questions in PSM research: is PSM a dynamic state or a stable trait (Wright and Grant 2010; Ritz *et al.* 2013)? All of this studies share that they try to isolate socialization and attraction–selection mechanism in order to find an explanation for the higher levels of PSM that is found among public sector workers compared to individuals working in the private sector. These mechanism, however, cannot explain the

often reported decline of PSM after job entry. In this current study, we focused on the question of how PSM develops over time and whether the reality shock – which is an often cited explanation for the drop of PSM (Kjeldsen 2013; Braender and Andersen 2013; Kjeldsen and Jacobsen 2012) – indeed can explain an possible decrease of PSM.

The results indicate that PSM seems to be an important aspect of newcomers' motivation. Like PSM among police officers in the Van Loon's et al. (2013) study, PSM among veterinary inspectors is primarily expressed by notions of normative motivation. This is not surprising, since veterinary inspectors – just like police officers – provide negative and unwanted services to their users: they enforce compliance with rules and regulations directed at, for example, protecting animal welfare and public health.

On the basis of two rounds of interviews with newcomers at the NVWA we can conclude that the level of PSM is not static, but dynamic. As also observed by Ward (2014) and Kjeldsen and Jacobsen (2012), we found that PSM generally decreases over time. Five individuals (40% of the interviewees) who in the first round of interviews indicated that they were public service motivated seemed to have lost their PSM 15 months later. This finding makes it all the more necessary to investigate whether the often cited 'reality shock' provides a suitable explanation for the drop in PSM (Kjeldsen, 2013; Braender and Andersen, 2013; Kjeldsen and Jacobsen, 2012). The central argumentation is that newcomers who initially were motivated by their interest to help others lose their motivation as they become disillusioned by the reality of their daily work (e.g., negative attitudes of clients, red tape, lack of gratitude). None of the individuals who entered the organization without PSM had acquired public service motivation 15 months later, which implies that the high level of PSM among public employees could indeed be the result of attraction and selection mechanisms, as Perry and Wise (1990) propose. The results of our analysis of organizational and work expectations prior to the first 'real' working experiences (during the first round of interviews, the interviewees were still participating in a training programme and thus had not yet taken up their regular tasks) were very interesting, because they showed clear differences between people who lost their PSM and those who remained public service motivated. At the same time, however, these results also showed that the 'reality shock', as it is

traditionally defined, cannot properly explain the loss of PSM. The group of employees who remained public service motivated had a much clearer picture of what the work as veterinary inspector implied than those who lost their PSM, both in terms of work content and possible difficulties. Because the individuals who lost their PSM did not have any clear expectations regarding their work, there could be no discrepancy between these expectations and the working reality. Nevertheless, the results are interesting because they increase our understanding of post-entry adoption mechanisms of PSM. Rather than the traditional reality shock, the results suggested that the lack strategies how to deal with the working reality might explain the loss in PSM. Individuals with clear expectations of their work seemed to be better able to deal with work difficulties, such as that inspectees showing resistant behaviour, being manipulating and lying. They indicated that they either accepted it as part of the job, framed it as a strategic game, or paid close attention to covering themselves by relying on rules and regulations. The 'covering' strategy can be linked to the work of Croziers (1963), who argues that civil servants consciously stick closely to the rules and regulations as a way to ensure their position and power, and to cover themselves against supervisors and clients. Hanging on to rules and regulations is seen as a reasonable strategy of self-protection. In contrast, individuals without an initial clear picture of what their job would look like they experienced serious work-related stress due to the lack of coping strategies. If I do not know what to expect from my work, I have clear disadvantage in developing strategies that help me to deal with potential difficulties at work. I conclude that because experiences the 'dark side' of their work as more stressful, they become frustrated and are no longer willing to contribute to society. This conclusion does not support findings by Oberfield (2014). In a longitudinal questionnaire study among police recruits, Oberfield found that the strongest predictor of entrants' motivation were their initial motivations. The results I found in this study, however, suggest that it is also very important to investigate organizational and job expectations and individuals' capacities to deal with work-related stress if we are interested in why PSM develops over time.

This line of argumentation is in line with literature on occupational stress. In this field of research, the relationship between stressful job conditions and adverse employee reactions has been investigated (e.g., Beehr, 1995; Spector and Jex, 1998). Results

suggest that active coping strategies can play a positive role in this relationship (Jex, Bliese, Buzzell and Priman, 2001). Individuals who know what the working reality looks like have an advantage over individuals without clear expectations, because they are able to actively find ways to deal with the demands of the working reality without losing their PSM.

The findings of this study can also be explained by self-determination theory. Fundamental to this theory is the idea that "satisfied basic psychological needs [need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness] provide the nutriments for intrinsic motivation and internalization" (Gagné and Deci, 2005, p. 336). Assuming that PSM is a specific form of intrinsic motivation (e.g., Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000), we may argue that non-fulfilment of basic needs crowds out PSM. The fulfilment of the needs for relatedness and competence seems to be especially important in this context. Individuals who had difficult relationships with the people they were inspecting – individuals who feel 'unrelated' – and who lacked the competence to deal with difficult situations seemed to have lost their PSM.

Previous studies found a negative relationship between red tape, which can be defined "as rules, regulations, and procedures that remain in force and entail a compliance burden, but do not advance the legitimate purposes the rules were intended to serve" (Bozeman, 2000, p. 12), and PSM. The argumentation here is that public service motivated individuals who are confronted with high levels of red tape become frustrated, which results in a decrease in PSM. In this study we did not find that annoyance at needless rules resulted in a loss of PSM. On the basis of this results it can be argued that the 'missing shock' might explain the non-effect of red tape on PSM. All individuals were well aware of the fact that working at the NVWA implies being confronted with many – sometimes redundant– rules and regulations. It can be argued that red tape did not surprise them, so that they were able to deal with it without losing PSM.

Two important conclusion can be drawn based on the results of this study. First, the results suggest that different intrinsic and extrinsic work motivations coexist. For example, respondents can be motivated by PSM and public sector motivation at the same time. Second, on the basis of empirical findings, we carefully conclude that the loss of

PSM cannot exclusively be explained by the traditional reality shock experienced by newcomers, as often suggested (e.g., Braender and Andersen, 2013; Kjeldsen and Jacobsen, 2012). Rather, on the basis of the results of this study, we argue that the inability to deal with the demands of the daily work because of lack of clear organizational and job expectations in individuals starting work as veterinary inspector might be a better, or at least additional, explanation for the post-entry dynamics of PSM. Overall, these findings contribute to the current debate on of the stability of PSM and, beyond that, to the debate on the mechanisms explaining *why* PSM changes. For the practice this findings imply that ensuring that selected individuals have a clear picture of their tasks and of potential difficulties they might encounter at work (e.g., manipulation, lying and aggression) might prevent them from becoming frustrated and hence losing their PSM. An alternative strategy might be to invest in training programmes that focus on teaching employees how to deal with work-related difficulties and stress.

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Appendix

Table demographic characteristics

Table topic list (first and second round)

Coding scheme (first and second round)